

# Breakfast Spotlight on Troy, MT

When the Superintendent of Troy Elementary approached Kris Newton, Head Cook at W.F. Morrison Elementary School, about participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), she had some initial concerns. Although Kris believed that feeding all kids for free was a good idea, she was concerned that with an already tight budget, any change may push her program into the negative. However, she knew that the needs of the students outweighed the potentially complicated task of reorganizing the food budget so she agreed with the Superintendent and they took on CEP at W.F. Morrison School.

Participating in CEP was not the only change for W.F. Morrison's school meal program. Spurred on by the decision to participate in CEP, Kris and the staff at W.F. Morrison decided to stop serving breakfast in the cafeteria before school and instead serve it in the classroom after the start of the school day. Kris had been looking into the Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) model for a while and knew it would work well in conjunction with CEP. The combination of CEP and BIC helped W. F. Morrison increase their Average Daily Participation (ADP) in breakfast from 60 students in the 2013-2014 school year, to an ADP of over 170 students in 2014-2015!

The transition to Breakfast in the Classroom has gone smoothly. Each morning, Kris pushes a cart stacked with breakfast totes to each classroom. The classrooms are all equipped with paper products, serving utensils, garbage bags, and cleaning supplies so that the only thing that needs to be dropped off is the morning meal. In the younger grades, teachers serve breakfast to students at their desks while in the older classes, the breakfast totes are



set on a counter and the students serve themselves buffet style and return to their desk to eat. Once the kids are finished eating, all the trash from breakfast is put in garbage bags and placed outside the door to be picked up later by student helpers.

Before switching to BIC, Kris had a conversation with the teachers and janitorial staff at W.F. Morrison. "I made sure to include everyone in this transition so that they all felt involved and knew their concerns would be addressed." For example, the janitorial staff was concerned about syrup being used in the classrooms so Kris agreed to not serve syrup. Additionally, some of the teachers preferred to serve breakfast in the middle of the morning when they noticed their students started paying less attention, so Kris agreed to serve these classrooms later in the morning rather than at the beginning of the school day like the other classes.



Feedback from administration, teachers, and parents has all been positive. Teachers have been able to effectively use the time while the students are eating to take role, read stories, or ask questions regarding the previous night's homework. The ease of no longer collecting free and reduced price meal (FRP) applications had made the business clerk very happy. Many parents have also given positive feedback on the program, especially those whose kids rode the bus to school and often did not arrive early enough to eat breakfast before school.

When asked how the change affected the kitchen staff Kris said "It really hasn't caused more work for the kitchen staff, just different work." Rather than staying in the kitchen all day, Kris now walks through the school multiple times a day to drop off and pick up breakfast totes.

Kris's advice to schools interested in changing how they serve breakfast is to not get discouraged too quickly. "Our first month was a little stressful, but anytime you start something new there are going to be challenges," said Kris. Now that the kitchen staff, teachers, kids, and janitorial staff have had time to get used to the new routine, breakfast goes very smoothly. And what about the budget she was worried about upsetting? In the first month of serving, Kris found that switching to CEP and BIC actually put them ahead a couple hundred dollars, eliminating her fear of the new breakfast program being a financial burden. And if that's not enough, teachers have already noticed that student classroom behavior has improved since changing the breakfast program and that they are also able to pay attention better during class.

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## **Do you have questions for Troy about their BIC program?**

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